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ABSTRACT

Trends in foreign student enrollments and the policies of public colleges toward foreign students were surveyed as a followup to a 1981 survey. Of 1,491 colleges that received questionnaires, 904 responded. Special attention was focused on differences in the patterns of results for: institutions with large foreign student populations, institutions with high rates of growth of foreign students, and states with the largest number of foreign students. Research concerns pertained to foreign student services, admissions and enrollments, and tuition policy. Findings include the following: the adequacy of services for foreign students has decreased; changes with regard to financial assistance and qualifications for admission are more likely to be adverse than favorable; changes in policy introduced by the institutions with the largest numbers of foreign students depart from the norm but the direction of their impact is not consistently either positive or negative; among the states with the largest concentrations of foreign students, only New York stands out as having made it more difficult for foreign students to come; and the institutions where the foreign student population is growing at a relatively rapid rate appear to encourage this growth and are clearly not taking actions to restrict it. (SW)

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A SURVEY OF POLICY CHANGES:

FOREIGN STUDENTS IN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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INTRODUCTION

In October 1981, the Institute of International Education (IIE) published a survey report on recent policy changes towards foreign students in public institutions of higher education. The immediate reason for the survey was to ascertain the effect of political protests by Iranian students during the Iranian hostage crisis. There was some concern about the possibility that these political protests might stimulate negative public reactions, not only towards the Iranians but towards foreign students more generally. The results of the 1981 survey were reassuring in this regard, indicating that few changes in policy had taken place.

Three areas of policy were selected for attention at that time:

a. the provision of special services to foreign students;

b. the tuition that foreign students are charged;

c. the requirements stipulated for their admission.

It seemed at least possible that institutions (or the legislatures that determine their financial support) might take steps to curtail foreign student services and decrease the flow of foreign students. Apart from the political impact of the Iranian crisis, there was reason to think that the considerable growth of the foreign student population, coupled with financial stringencies on the domestic front, might lead to efforts to manipulate costs and requirements to slow down or reduce the rate of growth.

In fact, a majority of the institutions surveyed reported that their international student services had kept pace with foreign student enrollments, and even larger majorities (around 90 percent) reported no recent changes in foreign students tuition or admissions requirements. Insofar as state legislatures were disposed to intervene at all, it is fair to say, the amount of change or intervention was not a cause for concern.

After the publication of the first study, it seemed to IIE staff desirable to repeat it periodically. The immediate problem that occasioned the 1981 survey is no longer salient, but other problems, especially, the fiscal situation of higher education, have become, if anything, more urgent, and the perception that the number of foreign students will continue to increase rapidly, however ill-founded, is still prevalent. A repetition of the survey would enable those in higher education responsible for foreign students to keep abreast of developments that might affect the scale and composition of the flow of foreign students and their distribution among institutions in the United States.

The results of the current survey are less reassuring than those obtained two years ago. In order for students from other countries to come to the United States and to have rewarding educational experiences here, certain favorable conditions have to exist in the institutions of higher education that they are disposed to attend. These institutions must take into account the foreign students' economic situation, the educational contributions they may make and the educational handicaps they may have, and their need for special services to deal with legal, educational, and personal problems.

The extent to which these favorable conditions exist has eroded noticeably in the last two years: services have suffered, financial aid has been reduced, and requirements for admission have become more difficult to meet. There is room for disagreement about whether "major" changes have occurred that might significantly affect the flow of foreign students to public institutions of higher education. What is clear is that some aspects of current trends warrant attention.

1,500 Public Institutions Receive Questionnaires

As in 1981, IIE distributed a questionnaire to all two-year and four-year public institutions, 1,491 in all. The questionnaire dealt with the same three basic issues as before (services, tuition, admission), though specific questions were in some instances formulated

somewhat differently. This does not preclude comparisons between the 1981 and 1983 results. Of the 1,491 institutions that received the questionnaire, 904 returned them filled out completely or in part. (Of these 904, 544 were two-year institutions and 360 were four-year institutions). This is a very respectable return rate of 61 percent.

In analyzing the responses we received, we took into account a number of characteristics of responding institutions. The purpose was to obtain somewhat deeper understanding of the impact of the changes in policy and practice that are taking place.

a. We gave special attention to institutions that have large numbers of foreign students, in absolute terms (not in terms of their percentage of the total student body). It seemed possible that the approach to foreign students in these institutions might be different. Also, insofar as these institutions have policies that are more positive or more negative than those of all public institutions in the country, large numbers of foreign students are affected, and therewith a significant proportion of the total foreign student population.

b. A second category of institutions singled out for attention were those that reported that the rate of growth of the foreign student population in recent years had been higher than 25 percent. Again, we conjectured that such a rate of growth might have special reasons or consequences, and that the nature of policy changes in these institutions might depart from the norm for all public institutions.

c. It seemed to us also that changes in policy might occur in different measure in those states with the largest number of foreign students (California, New York, Texas, Florida, Massachusetts, Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and the District of Columbia). Conceivably, large numbers of foreign students, together with local economic and/or demographic conditions, have consequences for the extent to which the flow of foreign students is encouraged or restricted.

To summarize the above, then, in the analysis of the results of the survey, we indicate, if possible, overall responses (generally in terms of percentages of institutional responses) and the extent to which institutions with large foreign student populations, with high rates of growth of foreign students, and in the states with the largest numbers of foreign students, differ from the overall picture.

RESULTS OF THE 1983 SURVEY

Increase in Foreign Students

As might be expected from other evidence (see, for example, Open Doors), more than half of the responding institutions reported that the number of foreign students increased in the last five years. In more than half the cases of increase (55 percent), the rate was greater than 25 percent. Some 40 of the responding institutions have 1,000 or more foreign students and just under 100 have 500 or more. Of those with 500 or more, 33 reported an increase of 25-49 percent, 14 an increase of 50-74 percent, 3 an increase of 75-100 percent, and 10 reported increases of over 100 percent. High rates of increase do not, therefore, involve trivial numbers of foreign students.

International Student Services

At a time when institutions of higher education are experiencing considerable financial difficulties, we might well expect services to foreign students to have suffered significantly. Trouble may be on the horizon, but so far it has not become serious. A majority of the responding institutions have not yet experienced a discrepancy between the relative change in the number of foreign students and the state of services. As many as 18 percent overall reported that services had expanded to keep pace with the increase in foreign students. Although 20 percent reported that services had not changed or had been reduced in spite of an increase in foreign students, almost none felt that such contraction affected foreign student services more than other student services.

It is worth examining these developments in the light of the size of the foreign student populations that are involved. Ninety-seven, or 11 percent of institutions responding to this question, have 500 or more students. Of these, 36 percent (or double the percentage of all responding institutions) have expanded their services to foreign students to keep pace with the increase, while 31 percent (half as many as overall) reported that services remained unchanged in spite of an increase in the number of foreign students. Eight percent (compared to 5 percent overall) reported reduced services.

As in the case of the entire set of responding institutions, almost none of those with large foreign student populations felt that foreign student services had suffered disproportionately as student services were cut overall.

As anticipated, by far the most frequently cited reason (87 percent of responses) for the contraction of services was financial constraints. However, 19 percent of all responding institutions explained the contraction by lack of interest in foreign student problems. This suggests that the impression that foreign students do not have very high priority on some campuses has a certain validity. Even in 21 percent of the 65 responding institutions with 500 or more foreign students, lack of interest was suggested as a reason for the diminished adequacy of foreign student services, though in these institutions financial constraints were cited in almost all instances as well.

The problems that result from the relative contraction of services tend to lie in the administrative area (difficulty in managing foreign student funds, 15 percent, and in dealing with immigration problems, 17 percent). Problems also arise in helping students with personal adjustment (16 percent). In institutions with 500 or more students, these administrative difficulties are, understandably, even more acute, with 33 percent of the institutions reporting trouble in administering student funds and dealing with immigration issues (these are, presumably, institutions that did not expand their services). Further inquiry would be required to establish the severity of these

difficulties, but there is evidence here to suggest that, especially where the flows of foreign students are large, the need for services may soon become a real issue.

Tuition Policy

For public institutions or for state legislatures with a disposition to limit the number of foreign students, the most convenient mechanisms would appear to be those that increase the price that these students have to pay for their education. There are two such mechanisms: the reduction of the number of tuition waivers granted to foreign students and the imposition of fees or surcharges (over and above those that out-of-state students have to pay). We find that in 83 percent of the responding institutions the policy with regard to tuition waivers remained the same as in the past; in some 8 percent the number of such waivers decreased, and in 5 percent they were eliminated. At the same time, in 6 percent of all responding institutions the number of tuition waivers increased. Ten percent of institutions overall reported tuition surcharges for foreign students: in 39 percent of these instances the surcharge was under $100 per semester; in 28 percent it was between $100 and $250 per semester; and 33 percent of responding institutions reported surcharges over $250 per semester.

With regard to pricing education for foreign students, we found some differences in the pattern of response overall and in the pattern of institutions with 500 or more foreign students. These differences do not show up with regard to surcharges, which occur in 10 percent of all responding institutions and 8 percent of those with more than 500 students. In regard to tuition waivers, however, the percentage of "500 plus" institutions reporting no change was only 56 percent (compared to 83 percent overall), while 24 percent (as cf. 8 percent) reported a reduction in the number of waivers, 3 percent the elimination of waivers, and 14 percent (cf. 6 percent overall) an increase. These percentages (except for the 3 percent elimination of waivers) all seem significantly different from those of responding institutions overall. Curiously, the institutions with many foreign students appear to be taking <u>both</u> more positive and more negative actions towards them.

With regard to pricing policies, there appears to be more change in institutions with many foreign students than in those with rapidly growing numbers of foreign students. In this latter category, we find more or less the same patterns as in all responding institutions.

When we examined the states with the largest foreign student populations, we found one major exception to the overall patterns of response, and a few less dramatic differences. The major exception is New York State, where 53 percent of responding institutions report a decrease in tuition waivers and only 40 percent report no change in the number of waivers. In California, 16 percent of institutions reported decreases (compared to 8 percent overall); 16 percent of Illinois institutions reported an increase in waivers (compared to 6 percent overall); and 95 percent of institutions responding from Texas reported no change in the number of waivers.

It is not possible here to assess the total impact of the changes in the pricing of education to foreign students in the states with the largest concentrations of foreign students or in the institutions with many foreign students. Our results suggest that these institutions and states do show departures from the national norms that are important because of the numbers of foreign students that are affected, and that developments there should be watched closely.

Not surprisingly, the reasons offered for less favorable tuition policies are in one way or another economic; they have to do with the special cost of foreign students and with the lack of compensatory contributions by foreign students to the U.S. economy or the local economy through certain forms of taxation. Insofar as changes in tuition policy have had any effects (66 percent of all responding institutions and 51 percent of institutions with 500 or more foreign students reported no effects), they are reported to have decreased the number of foreign students and, more particularly, students from the poorest countries. In the institutions with large numbers of foreign students, a larger proportion (22 percent as against 16 percent) report a decrease in students from the poorest countries than do so in all

responding institutions. It should be noted here that the total number of institutional responses to this question was not very large, suggesting that judgments of this kind are not easy for foreign student advisers (who were usually responsible for completing our questionnaire) to make.

Foreign Student Admissions

The second mechanism that we would expect to be used if there is a disposition to influence the number of foreign students coming to institutions in a particular state is a change in admissions requirements. Of all responding institutions, a much larger proportion (44 percent) report different admissions requirements for foreign students than report changes in tuition (17 percent). Thirteen percent of the responding institutions (including both some that did and some that did not report "different" admissions requirements) have begun to require evidence that foreign students are financially solvent. Among those reporting such special requirements, most indicate that they are designed in one way or another to limit admissions. In institutions with 500 or more foreign students, the corresponding percentage is 54 percent. To be sure, only 30 percent of responding institutions indicate stiffer admissions requirements for foreign students than for domestic ones if TOEFL scores are not included among the criteria for admission. But TOEFL turns out to be a convenient mechanism for limiting admissions for the institutions (57 percent of all respondents) that want to limit the admission of foreign students; of those that have modified their admissions requirements, 40 percent raised the cut-off point on TOEFL.

In the states with large numbers of foreign students, admissions policies have generally been similar to the overall pattern, but there is again at least one notable exception. New York State reported a far above average percentage of changes in admissions requirements, and the explicit purpose of those changes reported by 85 percent of responding institutions is to limit admissions of foreign students. In California, 62 percent of responding institutions reported similar efforts to limit admissions.

When we look at the institutions with the most rapid rate of growth of the number of foreign students, the results are interesting. Only 25 percent (compared to 37 percent overall) report different admissions requirements for foreign students. Twenty-five percent (as against 30 percent overall) report stiffer admissions requirements. While overall only 9 percent report that changes in admissions requirements are designed to increase the number of foreign students, 19 percent of the institutions with rapid growth report this purpose. One might conclude from this that the institutions that have rapidly growing numbers of foreign students are deliberately encouraging such growth.

Among the institutions that want to limit the number of foreign students through admissions requirements, 11 percent of all institutions and 21 percent of those with 500 or more foreign students want to establish a maximum percentage; and 12 percent in each group want a maximum percentage from any one nation. The prevalent use of TOEFL may well accomplish the first purpose but not the second, since foreign students from anglophone countries surely have an advantage on TOEFL. We might note that the universities trying to limit the number of foreign students include many of the most eminent state universities, and this may be regarded as a cause of some concern.

As for the reasons offered for changes in admissions requirements, they are somewhat different from those offered for tuition changes. The cost factor appeared in about half the responses, but another reason offered by 39 percent is the maintenance or raising of academic quality. Of the 52 institutions with 500 or more foreign students that provided responses, 46 percent indicated academic quality as the reason for changes in admissions requirements. It is worth noting, however, that many of the "flagship" universities did not associate themselves with this concern, therewith confirming the widely-held view that in the best universities foreign students are likely to be among the best students.

A relatively small number of institutions (187) reported efforts to use admissions policy to increase the number of foreign students. As we have noted, these appear to be universities with rapidly growing foreign student populations. The principal reasons offered were the desirability of increasing the diversity of the student body (72 percent of responses) and maintaining or enhancing academic quality (38 percent). Some of the institutions involved have considerable academic distinction, and they appear to see foreign students as a way of maintaining their standing.

Changes Since 1981

It is important to know not only whether or not public institutions of higher education have modified their policies vis-a-vis foreign students but also whether there seems to be a major recent increase in such actions. There has been no recent stimulus to negative actions comparable to the Iranian hostage crisis. As noted above, however, not too soundly based projections of rapid increases in foreign student flows might well lead to various kinds of restrictive actions.

Our survey is not, in this respect, completely reassuring. Although we found no recent groundswell of activity that might adversely affect the flow of foreign students to U.S. universities, some 30 percent of responses indicated that adverse admissions policies had been adopted and 23 percent indicated unfavorable tuition policies.

The survey asked for assessments of the direction of changes since 1981 and found that, while fewer than 10 percent of institutions reported increased pressure to reduce services to foreign students, some 16 percent had a sense of decreasing financial aid and 29 percent of increasingly stiff admissions requirements. This is cause for some degree of concern. IIE will, in all likelihood, see good reason to repeat the kind of survey reported here in about two years' time.

Conclusion

In summary, our survey suggests that the situation of foreign students in public institutions of higher education looks something like this:

a. Foreign students who come to these colleges and universities will find some decrease in the adequacy of services that are provided for them;

b. Changes with regard to financial assistance and qualifications for admission are more likely to be adverse than favorable;

c. Changes in policy introduced by the institutions with the largest numbers of foreign students depart from the norm, but the direction of their impact is not consistently either positive or negative;

d. Among the states with the largest concentrations of foreign students, only New York stands out as having made it more difficult, through the decrease of tuition waivers and stiffer admissions requirements, for foreign students to come;

e. The institutions where the foreign student population is growing at a relatively rapid rate appear to be inclined to encourage this growth and are clearly not taking actions to restrict it.

A NOTE ON THE STATES

IIE's 1981 survey explored the extent to which legislatures were becoming significantly more active in establishing foreign student policy at public institutions. Overall, little action had been taken. Several legislatures had acted in regard to tuition policy. Very few had become involved in the other two areas covered by the survey (international student services and admissions policy).

The current survey also asked questions designed to elicit information as to whether state legislatures (and/or state higher education authorities) had taken recent action in regard to foreign student policies. Respondents indicated that little of significance had taken place in the majority of states. In the states in which actions had been taken, they again focused on tuition policy.

Two caveats should be introduced in regard to the information reported on these changes in policy. First, we discovered in both this and the last survey that the awareness of campus respondents of changes in progress in their state capitals varied greatly. Second, the process of change is often complex: bills are introduced year after year without passage, or are vetoed, or are held up in litigation for extended periods, or are modified in practice by state boards of regents. Respondents may sometimes have been unaware of the latest developments.

Among statewide actions taken, attempted, or contemplated are the following:

Florida's 1981 law to raise foreign student tuition was vetoed by the governor, and a law charging public school tuition to children of foreign students failed to pass both houses of the legislature.

Idaho's tuition surcharge on foreign students, imposed in 1979, is believed to be still in litigation in a Federal District Court case filed by a group of Iranian students in 1980.

A tuition-related issue dragged on for several years in Maryland. Students related to employees of international banks (G-4 visa holders) sought to claim resident status for tuition purposes. Maryland fought

this in the courts. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled against Maryland in 1982, in a case in which all 50 states had joined, forcing Maryland and several other states to adjust residency requirements in special visa categories.

Legislation was introduced in the Mississippi legislature to raise foreign student tuition, which, however, did not pass.

New York State eliminated all waivers to foreign undergraduates effective 1982, but foreign graduate students with assistantships are still eligible for support.

The Ohio legislature has sought to eliminate foreign graduate student subsidies (there are none for undergraduates). This attempt has been strongly opposed by the Ohio Board of Regents.

In Oregon, the legislature has phased out tuition waivers for foreign students. Oregon State University, however, has worked out an innovative plan through which foreign students can pay in-state tuition if they provide educational services to Oregon schools (and demonstrate financial need).

Oklahoma's legislature has introduced a small ($15/semester) international student maintenance fee to cover the costs of processing foreign student-related paperwork, and its Board of Regents recently raised TOEFL requirements statewide.

Bills to impose tuition surcharges on foreign students have been introduced, but not passed, in the last three annual sessions of the Texas state legislature. A proposed $150/semester administrative fee was not passed during the 1983 session. The Coordinating Board of the Texas College and University System recently appointed a high-level task force to review foreign student issues.

Washington State eliminated the opportunity that foreign students (F-1 visa holders) once had to pay resident tuition if they worked on campus 20 hours weekly. Tuition waivers have been cut.